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# Colby grows in stature

Washington — The supplying of weapons of war and money by a country to friendly rebels in another has a long and honorable history, says William Colby, reaching back to Benjamin Franklin to prove his point.

American revolutionaries, he recalls, were supplied by France after Benjamin Franklin made a secret trip to Paris. The French were happy to oblige; they had no love for the British.

Now the Central Intelligence Agency, which he heads until his successor is confirmed by the Senate, is under restrictions from foreign adventures. The disclosures, some inaccurate of past involvement, has had "depressing effect on the initiatives of new projects," Colby says.

He is a man of action when it comes to America helping its foreign friends. That was his job in Southeast Asia. He supports CIA activities against Salvador Allende in Chile. He says the agency can "feasibly" do things to help block Communist governments in Portugal and Italy. There is a wistfulness when he observes that the "desirability of action" along Europe's southern coast is a "political decision."

Colby's stock has risen in the public prints and in Congress in the past two weeks. There are two principle causes. He is a professional intelligence gatherer and analyst, in contrast with George Bush, President Ford's nominee to take over the CIA.

Bush is a politician. A former Republican House member from Houston and chairman of the Republican National Committee, he faces serious opposition in Congress on the theory that partisan politics and national security intelligence powers are a dangerous blend of power and secrecy. Compounding this is the inclusion of Bush as a possible vice presidential nominee.

One other cause for Colby's reacquired status as an honorable practitioner of the black arts is the openness he has brought to congressional probes into the CIA's past misfeasance. Colby has acknowledged some agency errors while safeguarding the identification of agents, covers and contacts.

He also says, with deliberation, that the agency is limited in its response to critics. "I can't say we are reading internal documents of the Soviet Union" secured from contacts within the Soviet Government because they might serve to tip off Moscow's counter-intelligence operators.

Colby's stock also has risen with disclosures that he argued, sometimes successfully, with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. The sacking of Colby and Defense Secretary James Schlesinger suggests that the two men won a few battles, but lost the war to Kissinger.

That raises a major concern about Mr. Ford's latest explanation of the sackings: that he acted to relieve tension in his Cabinet. With Bush at the CIA and Donald Rumsfeld at the Pentagon, there may be less tension. But will the country be better served?

Colby says that morale at the CIA remains high despite criticism and disclosures. "We are the only agency in town that said no to Watergate," he says. And CIA agents have enlisted for the duration, good times and bad, he says.

The number of job applications filed with the CIA is up; the CIA, under Schlesinger and Colby, started its own housecleaning before Congress forced upon the windows a crack.

Now he wants Congress to keep the spotlight turned on. He would prefer one joint committee to hold down leaks. But pressure from outside helps internal discipline, he says.

Colby does not quarrel with the appointment of an outsider to run the agency. He calls Bush "a good man." He is not going to be pinned down, however, on whether he fully endorses Bush's nomination.